



# THIS DAY

Celebrating a century of  
British women's right to vote

Including works by

Judith Bingham

Rebecca Clarke

Imogen Holst

Elizabeth Maconchy

Roxanna Panufnik

Judith Weir

Blossom Street • Hilary Campbell

# THIS DAY

## Celebrating a century of British women's right to vote

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## This Day

### Celebrating a century of British women's right to vote

On 14 December 1918, for the first time in British history, women were permitted to both stand as candidates for Parliamentary seats and (subject to certain restrictions of age and property ownership) also granted the vote. In 2018, this was celebrated with a packed programme of events and projects which celebrated 'Vote 100' – and this, in turn, provided a much-needed opportunity for reflection on current levels of gender equality across contemporary society and culture.

While it is certainly true that women now occupy more high-level positions in musical life than they have in the past – with leading role models in Britain including Judith Weir, Master of the Queen's Music, and the new musical director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, we are still far more used to seeing men in such prominent roles, and indeed expect the majority of repertoire performed in classical concerts to be written by men. In *This Day*, Hilary Campbell and Blossom Street present a line-up of repertoire by both famous and lesser-known female composers, performed and conducted exclusively by women. The recording is also a celebration of repertoire for the upper voices of soprano and alto, bringing this distinctive and beautiful ensemble type – explored by highly skilful and creative composers – to new audiences, and includes many premiere recordings.

The composers featured on *This Day* fall loosely into three groups: those born at the turn of the 20th century, pioneers in their fields of professional performance, composition and supporting other women musicians; those born around the middle of the 1900s, now established and admired members of the musical community; and those born in the 1970s and 1980s, often seeking to unite an eclectic mix of influences in their works.

Of the earliest cluster, Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979) is the senior representative. A virtuoso violist and highly respected composer, she was the first female composition student of Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. Her beautiful *Ave Maria*, probably composed in c. 1937, is a rich marriage of unstable modal harmonies,

sliding effortlessly between keys, and a deeply moving syllabic style of setting the text which seems reminiscent of the motets of Anton Bruckner. Clarke's near contemporary Jane Joseph (1894–1929), who died tragically young after a highly promising early career as a teacher and performer on numerous instruments, takes a completely different approach in her *A little Childe there is ibore* of 1923. Sinuous melodic lines, almost in the style of chant, are set against an organ accompaniment in 7/8. Joseph matches the high voices of the singers with high registers for the organ in the outer sections of the piece, which sets an anonymous 15th-century text.

Joseph had been a pupil, and later amanuensis, of Gustav Holst. Holst's own daughter Imogen (1907–1984) also went on to have a high successful career as a composer and conductor. She taught and travelled extensively before taking up the directorship of music at Dartington Hall, later becoming an invaluable assistant to Benjamin Britten shortly after he founded the Aldeburgh Festival, and subsequently becoming its artistic director. As *I sat under a holly tree* is one of her many arrangements of a folk melody, a cheerful unaccompanied carol relating the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Holst takes this simple strophic song and dextrously colours each verse to match the details of the text – her addition of ringing bells in the final verse is particularly effective and a fittingly joyful conclusion.

Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987) was also much interested in folk song, hymns and carols, not least through her close friendship with Peter Warlock and her early study with Ralph Vaughan Williams. A tremendously energetic musician, she was highly regarded as a pianist, scholar, broadcaster and composer of concert, radio and TV music. *The Water of Tyne*, published in 1956, was issued as part of a series entitled *Folk Songs of Britain* issued by Boosey & Hawkes. It is a sweetly melancholic song, telling of the separation of lovers across the banks of the river.

Between this early generation of pioneers and the next, lies a family connection: Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994),

composer of the album's title work *This Day*, and her daughter Nicola LeFanu (b. 1947). *This Day*, based on an anonymous poem from c. 1450, reflects on the birth of Christ, a solo soprano beginning the piece before being joined by the rest of the ensemble. The music seems, at first, to be based around a jaunty pentatonic scale, dancing in triple time up and down the stave. But Maconchy constantly re-colours a chord here, a note there, producing moments of unexpected harmonies between voices (particularly on the clashing semitone of '*That he would be laid by beasts unkind*'). The result is full of both optimism and uncertainty, a fitting combination for the birth story of a child destined to suffer so much. LeFanu composed *Misterium mirabile* (also to an anonymous 15th-century text) in 1999. A combination of Latin and English text, it moves constantly from unison textures to overlapping layers of falling lines across the three voices. The piece both begins and ends as if the listener has happened upon a piece already in progress, and steps away again as the final syllables fade to a gentle hum and a partial word.

*Come home, little sister* was composed in 2017 by Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951). McDowall writes that this setting of a text by British poet Kevin Crossley-Holland 'is an affectionate salutation to a newborn babe', the child's parents waiting patiently, but excitedly, for their new daughter to reveal her name to them: 'come little sister, come little sister' sounds a percussive, driving rhythm throughout, sung and whispered under soaring lines for the upper voices. *The Ghost of Combermere Abbey* by Judith Bingham (b. 1952), also deals with a child, but this time it is a phantom – a young girl running around and around a bed, an apparition of a daughter long dead, as the snow falls outside the window. Bingham draws together a poem by Alice Elgar, *O snow which sinks so light*, with a verse on the clock at Chester Cathedral, '*When as a child I laughed and wept*.' The eerie blankets of falling snow (syllables and melodic lines falling between singers) casts the running ghost in a sinister light, the Chester poem disappearing into nothing as the apparition vanishes.

Current Master of the Queen's Music (and first woman to hold the position) Judith Weir (b. 1954) composed *Holy Innocents* for St Albans Abbey Girls Choir in 2016. Christina Rossetti's poem is shared by two interlocking soprano parts, one often imitating the other, the organ accompaniment moving from a high and somewhat mysterious floating texture to a more grounded, optimistic tone at the work's conclusion. Roxanna Panufnik (b. 1968) is the daughter of Polish composer and conductor Andrzej Panufnik, who escaped to Britain in 1954. Raised and trained in the UK, she is particularly interested in the opportunities music affords to draw together styles and cultures from different parts of the world. *The Sweet Spring* unites 'voices' of a very specific kind – the bird calls of the cuckoos, peewits and nightingales in Thomas Nash's late 16th-century poem.

Alison Willis (b. 1971) and Kerry Andrew (b. 1978) belong to the most recent generation of composers represented here. Willis's work is a setting of a well-known poem by Mary Elizabeth Frye, *Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep*, gentle and sustained as the words are sung over a series of ethereal suspensions from the other voices. Andrew's *Night-time Songs* draws together several well-known folk melodies into a single work, the singers providing vocal percussive sounds, along with clapping, clicking and 'swiping' (the swiping of the palm of the hand down the arm), in the central of the three songs presented.

*O splendissima gemma* is a work by Stef Conner (b. 1983) inspired by the hugely successful 1994 collaboration between The Hilliard Ensemble and saxophonist Jan Garbarek. A text by Hildegard von Bingen is set in the manner of a simply harmonised chant, while a solo clarinet weaves elaborate threads of melody around the choral texture – just as Garbarek improvised around works by Guillaume Dufay and others in the Hilliard project. Conner's exact contemporary is Blossom Street's conductor, Hilary Campbell (b. 1983), whose *Song of the Dane Women* is a setting of a text by Rudyard Kipling. '*Ah what is a woman that you forsake her?*', they ask, lamenting as their husbands are drawn away from them each year by the lure of the sea and glory in battle.

Katy Hamilton

**1 Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987):  
The Water of Tyne**  
(text: Traditional)

I cannot get to my love if I would dee,  
The water of Tyne runs between him and me;  
And here I must stand with a tear in my e'e,  
Both sighing and sickly my sweetheart to see.

O where is the boatman? My bonny hinny!  
O where is the boatman? bring him to me,  
To ferry me over the Tyne to my honey,  
And I will remember the boatman and thee.

O bring me a boatman, I'll give any money,  
And you for your trouble rewarded shall be,  
To ferry me over the Tyne to my honey,  
Or scull him across the rough river to me.

**2 Judith Weir (b. 1954): Holy Innocents**  
(text: Christina Rossetti, 1830–1894)

Sleep, little Baby, sleep;  
The holy Angels love thee,  
And guard thy bed, and keep  
A blessed watch above thee.  
No spirit can come near  
Nor evil beast to harm thee:  
Sleep, Sweet, devoid of fear  
Where nothing need alarm thee.

The Love which doth not sleep,  
The eternal Arms surround thee:  
The Shepherd of the sheep  
In perfect love hath found thee.  
Sleep through the holy night,  
Christ-kept from snare and sorrow,  
Until thou wake to light  
And love and warmth tomorrow.

**3 Nicola LeFanu (b. 1947): Misterium mirabile**  
(text: Anonymous, c. 1450)

Of a rose sing we  
Misterium mirabile. (a wonderful mystery)

This rose is red of colour bright  
Through whom our joy 'gan alight  
Upon Christmas night  
Claro David germine. (from the illustrious line of David)

Of a rose sing we  
Misterium mirabile.

Of this rose was Christ born  
To save mankind that was forlorn  
And us all from sins sore  
Prophetarum carmine.  
(according to the song of the prophets)

Of a rose sing we  
Misterium mirabile.

This rose of flowers she is flower  
She will not fade in any shower  
To sinful men she sent succour  
Mira plenitudine. (with wonderful fullness)

Of a rose sing we  
Misterium mirabile.

This rose is so fair of hue  
In maid Mary that is so true  
These was born Lord of virtue  
Salvator sine crimine. (guiltless Saviour)

Of a rose sing we  
Misterium mirabile.

④ **Stef Conner** (b. 1983):  
**O splendidissima gemma**  
(text: Hildegard von Bingen, 1098–1179)

O splendidissima gemma  
et serenum decus solis  
qui tibi infusus est,  
fons saliens  
de corde Patris,  
quod est unicum Verbum suum,  
per quod creavit mundi  
primam materiam,  
quam Eva turbavit.

Hoc Verbum effabricavit  
tibi Pater hominem,  
et ob hoc es tu illa lucida materia  
per quam hoc ipsum Verbum expiravit  
omnes virtutes, ut eduxit  
in prima materia omnes creaturas.

*[O jewel resplendent  
and bright and joyous beauty of the sun  
that's flooded into you –  
the fountain leaping  
from the Father's heart.  
This is his single Word  
by which he did create the world's  
primordial matter,  
a motherhood into confusion cast by Eve.*

*This Word the Father made  
for you into a man –  
and this is why you are that bright and shining matter,  
through which that Word has breathed  
forth every virtue, just as he brought forth  
all creatures in a primal motherhood.]*

⑤ **Kerry Andrew** (b. 1978): **Night-time Songs**  
(text: Southern US Traditional)

Hush little baby, don't say a word,  
Mama's gonna buy you a mocking bird.  
If that mocking bird don't sing  
Mama's gonna buy you a diamond ring.  
If that diamond ring turns brass  
Mama's gonna buy you a lookin' glass.  
If that lookin' glass don't shine  
Papa's gonna shoot that beau of mine.

One night as I lay on my bed,  
I dreamed about a pretty maid.  
I was so distressed,  
I could take no rest;  
Love did torment me so.  
So away to my true love I did go.

My love arose and opened the door,  
And just like an angel she stood on the floor.  
Her eyes shone bright  
Like the stars at night,  
No diamonds could shine so.  
So in with my true love I did go.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,  
Go to sleepy little baby.  
When you wake you shall have  
Cake and drive those pretty little horses.  
Black and bays, dapples and grays,  
Coach and six a little horses.  
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,  
Go to sleepy little baby.

Irene, goodnight,  
Irene, goodnight.  
Goodnight, Irene,  
Goodnight, Irene,  
I'll kiss you in my dreams.

⑦ **Judith Bingham** (b. 1952):  
**The Ghost of Combermere Abbey**  
(text: Anonymous; Caroline Alice, Lady Elgar, 1848–1920)

O snow, which sinks so light,  
Brown earth is hid from sight;  
O soul, be thou as white as snow.  
O snow which falls so slow,  
Dear earth quite warm below;  
O heart, so keep the glow  
Beneath the snow.

O snow, in thy soft grave  
Sad flowers the winter brave;  
O heart, so soothe and save, as does the snow.

Then as the snow all pure,  
O heart be, but endure;  
Through all the years full sure,  
Not as the snow.

Round and round and round and round.  
*When as a babe I laughed and wept, TIME crept.  
When as a youth I dreamed and talked, TIME walked.  
When I became a full grown man, TIME ran!  
And later, as I grew older, TIME flew!  
Soon I shall find whilst travelling on, TIME gone!  
Will Christ have saved my soul by then? Amen!*

⑧ **Jane Joseph** (1894–1929):  
**A little Childe there is ibore**  
(text: Anonymous, 15th century)

A little Childe there is ibore,  
Is sprung out of Jesse's store,  
To save us all that were forlore:  
Gloria tibi Domine!

Jesus that is so full of might,  
Ibore He was about midnight;  
The Angels sang with all their might  
Gloria tibi Domine!

Herdmen beheld these Angels bright:  
To them appeared with great light,  
And said: 'Goddès Son is borne this night,  
Gloria tibi Domine!'

Three Kings there came with their presents  
Of gold and myrrh and frankincense,  
As clerkès tell in their sequence,  
Gloria tibi Domine!

Now sit we down upon our knee,  
And pray that Childe that is so free  
And with good hertè now sing we:  
'Gloria tibi Domine!  
Qui natus es de virgine.'

9 **Rebecca Clarke** (1886–1979): **Ave Maria**  
(text: Traditional)

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum:  
benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus  
fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

Sancta Maria, regina caeli, dulcis et pia, O mater Dei:  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus, ut cum electis te videamus.

*[Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee:  
blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*Holy Mary, queen of heaven, sweet and pious,  
O mother of God: pray for us sinners,  
so that we may see thee with the saints.]*

10 **Hilary Campbell** (b. 1983):  
**Song of the Dane Women**  
(text: Rudyard Kipling, 1865–1936)

What is a woman that you forsake her,  
And the hearth-fire and the home-acre,  
To go with the old grey Widow-maker?

She has no house to lay a guest in –  
But one chill bed for all to rest in,  
That the pale suns and the stray bergs nest in.

She has no strong white arms to fold you,  
But the ten-times-fingering weed to hold you –  
Out on the rocks where the tide has rolled you.

Yet, when the signs of summer thicken,  
And the ice breaks, and the birch-buds quicken,  
Yearly you turn from our side, and sicken –

Sicken again for the shouts and the slaughters.  
You steal away to the lapping waters,  
And look at your ship in her winter-quarters.

You forget our mirth, and talk at the tables,  
The kine in the shed and the horse in the stables –  
To pitch her sides and go over her cables.

Then you drive out where the storm-clouds swallow,  
And the sound of your oar-blades, falling hollow,  
Is all we have left through the months to follow.

Ah, what is a Woman that you forsake her,  
And the hearth-fire and the home-acre,  
To go with the old grey Widow-maker?

11 **Imogen Holst** (1907–1984):  
**As I sat under a holly tree**  
(text: Traditional)

As I sat under a holly tree, a holly tree, holly tree,  
As I sat under a holly tree  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

I saw two ships come sailing in, come sailing in,  
sailing in,  
I saw two ships come sailing in  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Who d'you think were in those two ships,  
were in those two ships, in those two ships?  
Who d'you think were in those two ships  
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Joseph and Mary were in those two ships,  
were in those two ships, were in those two ships,  
Joseph and Mary were in those two ships  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Where d'you think they were going to,  
were going to, going to?  
Where d'you think they were going to  
On Christmas Day in the morning?

They were going to Bethlehem, to Bethlehem,  
Bethlehem,  
Oh they were going to Bethlehem  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And hark! The bells aringing clear, aringing clear,  
aringing clear,  
Hark! The bells aringing clear  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

12 **Roxanna Panufnik** (b. 1968):  
**The Sweet Spring**  
(text: Thomas Nash, 1567–c. 1601)

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,  
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,  
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,  
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,  
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,  
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!  
Spring! the sweet Spring!

**Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994):**

**This Day**

(text: Anonymous, c. 1450)

*An heavenly song, I dare well say,  
Is sung on earth to man this day.*

*This is the song that you shall hear,  
God is come from His empire,  
And is made man with high desire,  
This day.*

*He took our kind all of a maid,  
By ox and ass He was y-laid.  
Now is fulfilled that Scripture said,  
This day.*

*Ay I wonder this in my mind,  
That He that all may loose and bind,  
That He would be laid by beasts unkind,  
This day.*

*He is a lord and by nature  
A maiden's breast He sucked full pure.  
Heaven and earth be in His cure,  
This day.*

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**Blossom Street**



Blossom Street is a versatile and vibrant chamber choir comprising some of the UK's best young singers, which performs regularly on TV and radio as well as on the concert platform. Directed by Hilary Campbell, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, the group was formed over a decade ago, while the singers were studying at the University of York, and relocated to London in 2007. On the concert platform, Blossom Street has performed at many of the major London venues including Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square and St James's Piccadilly, and further afield at places like the Royal Palace, Madrid. The Choir has released two critically acclaimed albums on Naxos: *Sleep, Holy Babe* (8.572868) released in 2011, and *Down by the Sea* (8.573069) in 2013. In addition to its busy performance schedule, Blossom Street works regularly with a number of emerging composers, workshoping and recording their new music.

[www.blossomstreetchoir.com](http://www.blossomstreetchoir.com)

## Hilary Campbell



Hilary Campbell is the founder and musical director of Blossom Street, and musical director of Bristol Choral Society, Chiswick Choir and the Music Makers of London. Her project work includes acting as guest conductor of ensembles including the BBC Singers, Trinity Laban Chamber Choir and the University of Greenwich Choir, and chorus master of the BBC Symphony Chorus and Royal Academy of Music Symphony Chorus. She also runs an annual project with Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Weir, at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), in conjunction with Blossom Street and the RAM composition department, and began working there in 2017 as a BMus lecturer. In addition, she is the conductor of P&O Ferries Choir, the group which won the BBC2 series *The Choir*. In addition to her regular conducting work, Campbell is a founder member of the Voices of London Festival, and is also a published and prizewinning composer.

[www.hilarycampbell.com](http://www.hilarycampbell.com)

On 14 December 1918, women were permitted to stand for Parliament and were granted the vote for the first time in British history. As part of the centenary celebrations for this milestone and to raise awareness of persistent inequalities in society, Hilary Campbell and the distinctive choir, Blossom Street, present repertoire by famous and lesser-known female composers, ranging from Rebecca Clarke's moving *Ave Maria* to Stef Conner's haunting setting of Hildegard von Bingen's text *O splendidissima gemma*.



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### \*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Vanessa Bowers **7**, Melissa Davies **13**, Ellie Martin **10 14**, Emily Wenman **7**, Soprano

Phillipa Thomas, Mezzo-soprano **7** • Hannah Lawrance, Clarinet **4**

Annabel Thwaite, Piano **6 12** • Anna Lapwood, Organ **2 8**



## Blossom Street • Hilary Campbell

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet. The available sung texts are included in the booklet, and may also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/573991.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/573991.htm)

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